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Comfort's Decontamination Team Prepares for Combat Care
By Journalist 2nd Class Ellen Maurer, Military Treatment
Facility Comfort

AT SEA ABOARD USNS COMFORT - One of the United States' largest trauma facilities with the special ability to go just about anywhere there's water, Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) deployed after New Years and headed east. Their location, final destination, even the list of names of all crewmembers aboard has been kept quiet. What they're doing, though, is obvious to anyone who reads the newspaper - they're hoping for the best, but planning for the worst.

"Comfort's primary mission is medical and surgical care of combat casualties," said Capt. Charles Blankenship, Medical Corps, commanding officer of Medical Treatment Facility Comfort. "We left in early January to preposition the ship and to prepare the medical treatment facility in the event Comfort is needed for potential combat support."

However, being in the right place at the right time is only part of what Comfort must do to be ready. Medical treatment during war is changing. Now, it's not only a matter of treating bullet wounds and shrapnel injuries, but also anything from anthrax to smallpox, or even a nerve agent or deadly radiation. As the threat of chemical, biological or radiological attacks increase, it's the job of Comfort crewmembers to figure out ways to save the injured or infected without contaminating an entire ship and its crew.

To do this, it takes not only a good plan but also a lot of practice, said CBR patient decontamination team commander, Ens. Gary Hardy. He and his team spend two

hours each day running through drills that will help prepare them to receive patients of a CBR attack.

Their goal is to get contaminated patients from Comfort's helicopter pad into one the ship's three decontamination stations. Their last step is checking the patient to make sure all traces of contamination are gone so the patient can be transported into the ship's casualty receiving area where they will receive their next level of medical attention.

According to Hardy, speed is not the most important part of patient decontamination. Most important is thoroughness. But many of these patients will have injuries that require care, so they must work as quickly as possible without sacrificing safety.

"The team needs to be both fast and thorough because if we spread contaminants to the inside of the ship, the other medical crew can't do their job and then we've defeated our whole purpose," said Hardy.

According to Hardy, during training they move together like a machine and no one talks. Even though it's only training, Hardy said they take it seriously because in a real situation their ability to focus on the job could mean the difference between life and death - for them and their patients.

"My team, like the rest of the MTF crew, is completely dedicated to supporting our ship's mission of providing medical care to all in harm's way," said Hardy. "There are many threats out there. CBR is just one of them, but it's not one that will stop patient care aboard this ship."

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Naval Hospital Jacksonville Medical Platform Deploys
By Loren Barnes, Naval Hospital Jacksonville

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - A medical support platform comprised of nearly 100 medical personnel from Naval Hospital Jacksonville recently received orders to deploy to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of operations to support the global war on terrorism and to prepare for future contingencies as directed.

As the sun rose the morning of Jan. 26, a small group of medical personnel with 2nd Force Service Support Group (2nd FSSG) departed Naval Hospital Jacksonville. The remaining members followed them Jan. 30.

Naval Hospital Jacksonville executive officer Capt. John Sentell, Medical Corps, delivered parting remarks to the Sailors at the departure.

"I want you to know that we are proud of you, that the Jacksonville community is proud of you. You are well trained and I know you will serve us well. You are our 'A' team," he said.

Master Chief Hospital Corpsman James Piner reminded the enlisted members of 2nd FSSG of the proud tradition

of Navy hospital corpsmen. "Whether it was the Argonne Forest, Okinawa or Iwo Jima, Navy hospital corpsmen have served proudly and honorably for more than 100 years," he said.

The hospital's deployable platforms are comprised of personnel from Naval Hospital Jacksonville and its branch medical clinics, as well as from other naval hospitals in the continental United States. In addition to 2nd FSSG, the hospital maintains the Fleet hospital, the largest deployable contingent, as well as a group that is trained to support amphibious casualty receiving and treatment ships.

According to Naval Hospital Jacksonville director of medical services Capt. Robert Sorenson, Medical Corps, the 2nd FSSG is basically a surgical company whose role is similar to that of the MASH (mobile army surgical hospital) units portrayed in the movie and television series set in the Korean War.

The 2nd FSSG would support Marine forces in the field. It consists of several elements, including shock/trauma platoons that involve emergency medicine trained physicians, nurses and corpsmen. There are also multiple surgical platoons that include surgeons, anesthesiologists, certified nurse anesthetists, perioperative nurses and corpsmen. Other specialties are also included such as family physicians, pediatrics, OB/GYN and Medical Service Corps personnel.

The role of the 2nd FSSG shock/trauma platoon is to stabilize patients as they are brought into the field hospital. Platoon field corpsmen could also be sent to deliver care on the front lines. One such corpsman, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Daniel Urias, said he is confident in the preparation he and his fellow medical personnel have received.

"It's nonstop training for us," he said.

Urias, like all Navy hospital corpsmen, serves in a dual role. He's trained to deploy anywhere in the world as a field corpsman. While here at the Naval Hospital, he delivered care in the ear, nose and throat department.

His wife, Jennifer, and their 10-month-old daughter, Idalis, saw off Urias. He said missing out on those first year, special moments with his daughter would be what he misses most. "I may not get to see her walk for the first time or hear her first words," he said. Still, he's excited about going on his first deployment and executing the mission.

Sorenson is also confident in the skills and dedication of the 2nd FSSG personnel. "These are all quality nurses, doctors and corpsmen, and I expect they will deliver the same excellent care that they deliver at Naval Hospital Jacksonville," he said.

Capt. Ralph Lockhart, the hospital's commanding officer, said, "Naval Hospital Jacksonville is

absolutely up to the challenge of providing top-notch care at home while supporting our deployed forces at the tip of the spear. This is what we're here for, what we've trained for and what we will deliver."

While the men and women of 2nd FSSG are prepared to care for our troops abroad, Naval Hospital leadership has planned ahead to continue delivering the highest level of access to family-centered medical care at home. Both at home and abroad, Naval Hospital Jacksonville's health care providers are "simply the best."

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DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention in African Militaries Successes Highlighted

By Doris Ryan, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

SAN DIEGO - The success of the DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) in support of African militaries was highlighted recently during the first program review at the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC) San Diego. DHAPP assists the militaries of 26 African countries in developing intervention programs aimed at reducing the risk of HIV transmission.

A unique aspect of the DHAPP is the use of contractor support, in conjunction with direct military-to-military assistance, to develop new programs tailored to local cultures and conditions. In 2001 DHAPP developed a contracting process to solicit proposals from universities and other non-government organizations that resulted in these first 12 awards totaling \$3.2 million.

Contractors were funded to do a variety of projects like conducting surveillance studies, developing education material, designing overall programs, creating mass awareness campaigns, and distributing condoms. During the two-day review participants shared effective prevention approaches used in Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Namibia, Swaziland, and Tanzania.

"About one third of our program is contracted out," said Cmdr. Richard A. Shaffer, Medical Service Corps, the DHAPP program manager. "We brought in the first year performers to report on what they achieved. Because of their efforts we have growing programs in several African militaries and now have a wide variety of tools developed for our use that we didn't have before."

A good example of the programs reviewed included one established in Angola.

"No one expected us to be working with the Angolan military because of a recent war, but we have a very successful U.S. military program there mainly through the efforts of the in-country contractor," Shaffer said. "The program is in the early stages of development and includes an education campaign to change behavior that

incorporates educational messages, a "train the trainer" effort and the distribution of condoms."

Another program is underway in Namibia, where the military didn't have an HIV/AIDS prevention program in place. The military didn't automatically open the door, but after eight months of discussions, the military finally accepted DHAPP support and the rudimentary parts of a program are beginning with a focus on mass awareness and behavioral change campaigns. Without a contractor in the country, this never would have happened.

Another program, one that wouldn't have gotten off the ground without the in-country contract's efforts, is developing voluntary counseling and testing centers in Ethiopia. Shaffer said what made this program a success is the way the contractor coordinated with international efforts in the civilian population and adapted those efforts to the military population.

DHAPP deals specifically with direct military to military cooperation, and efforts are consistent with what Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other organizations support in regards to efforts like screening, surveillance, education, infrastructure development, and mass awareness campaigns. Beyond that, DHAPP also looks at military specific issues like operational tempo and highly mobile populations that live a long time away from families.

"We are very proud of these first year accomplishments," said Shaffer. "We have a wide variety of successes in voluntary counseling and testing, a substantial amount of new material built around behavioral change for military members, a very impressive selection of video tapes, and lots of training materials. The review showed a very nice picture of the individual successes that make up an effective prevention program. The next generation of contractors will build on the success of the first. The US military has shown that it can be a very important international partner in the fight against HIV/AIDS around the world."

The Naval Health Research Center was tasked by the Navy Surgeon General to serve as the US Department of Defense's Executive Agent for the DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program. DHAPP is funded by DoD Health Affairs.

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New 4-D Ultrasound Technology Offered at Bethesda
By Journalist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Sybil McCarrol, National
Naval Medical Center Bethesda

BETHESDA, Md. - A new 4-dimensional ultrasound machine at National Naval Medical Center Bethesda's Prenatal Assessment Care Unit, is providing truer images of unborn children, thrilling healthcare professionals

and parents alike.

Army Lt. Col. Christian Macedonia, a maternal fetal specialist working at Bethesda, is well acquainted with ultrasound machine and raves about its efficient technology.

"For scanners like myself, working with this machine is like learning a new language," said Macedonia. "Real time research has been done on improving ultrasounds for 30 years. Finally, computers have become advanced enough to handle this sort of data."

According to Macedonia, the new 4-d takes the same data that the old 2-dimensional ultrasound generates and produces a 3-dimensional, clear, lifelike image of the baby.

"The simplest way to explain how 4-d functions is to compare it with its predecessor, the 2-dimensional ultrasound. While the 2-d acts like a virtual knife, and takes 2-Dimensional picture slices of the body, the 4-d takes those slices and puts them together to form a 3-dimensional whole image."

This video image appears in real time, showing the baby as it moves and develops in the womb. The real time is the fourth dimension, hence the name "4-d."

"This purchase was done with patients in mind," said Macedonia. "It truly has a unique niche in medicine. This is a democratization of medicine that allows patients to see what the doctor sees. People can see characteristics of the baby's face and facial expressions because the clarity is sharp."

Lt. Cmdr. Carl Millward, Medical Corps, an anatomic pathologist, and wife Lisa have already spent some time with their daughter via 4-d.

"It was fantastic," said Millward. "Getting to see her little face . . . it was an experience all in its own. This truly is a great resource for the Navy community."

The 4-d is an exceptional tool for finding anomalies in babies so they can be addressed at the earliest opportunity. "Anomalies are easy to see on the 4-d," explained Macedonia. "It's important for a parent to understand the level of complications their child will have. They have to begin researching and think about surgeries and maybe prolonged medical care once their child is born."

Macedonia is convinced that the potential of the 4-d is just beginning to be tapped.

"For example, we want to establish a telemedicine network in the future where we can provide a level of care regardless of where the patient is located," said Macedonia. This is not a fad, but a unique American way of medicine that is here to stay."

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Corpsmen Features on History Channel

The History Channel will broadcast "Unsung Heroes - Navy Corpsmen: The Blood Angels" on Monday, Feb. 10 at noon and 6 p.m.

The hour-long program features dynamic interview with veterans and new, never-seen-before footage. It is a testament to corpsmen, whose courage and sense of duty have saved thousands of Marines and Sailors over two centuries.

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NEHC Cancels Occ Health and Preventive Medicine Workshop
PORTSMOUTH, Va. - The 43rd Navy Occupation Health and Preventative Medicine Workshop, scheduled for May 2003 in San Diego, has been cancelled.

Capt. David M. Sack, Medical Corps, the commanding officer of Naval Environmental Health Center Portsmouth, which sponsors the annual workshop, cited national commitments for the cancellation.

"Many of our intended audiences, as well as our intended guest speakers and instructors, may be deployed or, if not, unable to attend the conference due to more pressing matters at home," wrote Sack in the cancellation announcement.

Planning has already begun on the 2004 workshop, which is only 13 months away.

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TRICARE Unveils New and Improved Guard And Reserve Website

FALLS CHURCH, Va. - If you're a Naval or Marine Corps Reservist who might be recalled to active duty, one of your first stops should be TRICARE's New and Improved Guard and Reserve website, www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/index.cfm.

Fact sheets, briefings and brochures, and the latest news about Reserve Component mobilization are available for viewing or download.

The site has been reorganized and updated with fresh content and helpful links. To help deliver the benefit optimally, survey questions have been added to the bottom of that page to allow users to comment on the utility of the website.

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HealthWatch: Early Dental Care Can Mean A Lifetime of Healthy Smiles

By Lt. Shayesteh Shafie, 1st Dental Battalion Naval Dental Center Camp Pendleton, Calif. and Aveline V. Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

WASHINGTON - Brush your teeth in the morning, after every meal and at bedtime. Sound familiar? February is National Children's Dental Health Month, and parents can be thankful that preventive dental care has greatly

improved the oral health of American children.

While brushing is key to maintaining good oral health, there are additional things you can do to ensure your children maintain their smiles for a lifetime.

"Providing nutritious foods and limiting sweets are two things most parents see as important in protecting their child's teeth, but few stop to consider the benefits of mouth guards," said Capt. Mathew Ausmus, Dental Corps, Navy Medicine's pediatric dentistry specialty leader.

He explained that with skateboards, inline skates and scooters being so popular in today's society, there has been a significant increase in the cases of dental trauma seen by dentists.

"Mouth guards prevent serious injury to the teeth during these activities," said Ausmus.

The 1st Dental Battalion, Naval Dental Center Camp Pendleton is doing its part this month to help parents and caregivers maintain their children's dental health. Some of the tips they offer include taking your child to see the dentist regularly beginning by the child's first birthday, put only water in a child's naptime or bedtime bottle to prevent baby bottle tooth decay, start brushing the child's teeth with water as soon as the first tooth appears, and start flossing when two of the child's teeth begin to touch.

NDC Camp Pendleton will also be hosting a variety of activities in recognition of children's dental health this month. These services will be offered to at least 8,000 children, parents and teachers. Some of these activities include visits to local elementary schools, pre-schools and base development centers. During these events, command members plan to do presentations, dental lectures, audiovisual events, and distribute toothbrushes and stickers to the children. A special highlight of this endeavor will be TRICARE dental contractor, United Concordia, hosting a contest for children during the visits.

Although many events will be taking place in observance of children's dental health this month, general dental health practices for children have been enhanced. It's now possible for many children to reach adulthood without experiencing tooth decay. Ask your dentist about dental sealants, a thin protective barrier that shields the chewing surface of back teeth against tooth decay.

Preventing tooth decay is just one of the preventive methods parents should aim for with their children's teeth.

Good oral health practices should begin in infancy and continue throughout adult life. In your child's early years, you must provide this care. Later you will need to instruct, monitor and motivate your child to help maintain good oral health habits.

"Parents and caregivers must instruct, monitor and motivate the child to develop and maintain good oral health habits," said Ausmus. "Positive attitudes learned early will serve the child well throughout life."

For more information, visit the American Dental Associations' web site at www.ada.org.

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